

***Online Appendix for
Ideology, Learning, and Policy Diffusion:
Experimental Evidence****

Daniel M. Butler, Yale University
Craig Volden, University of Virginia
Adam M. Dynes, Brigham Young University
Boris Shor, University of Chicago

Abstract

We introduce experimental research design to the study of policy diffusion in order to better understand how political ideology affects policymakers' willingness to learn from one another's experiences. Our two experiments, embedded in national surveys of U.S. municipal officials, expose local policymakers to vignettes describing the zoning and home foreclosure policies of other cities, offering opportunities to learn more. We find that: (1) policymakers who are ideologically predisposed against the described policy are relatively unwilling to learn from others, but (2) such ideological biases can be overcome with an emphasis on the policy's success or on its adoption by co-partisans in other communities. We also find a similar partisan-based bias among traditional ideological supporters, who are less willing to learn from those in the opposing party. The experimental approach offered here provides numerous new opportunities for scholars of policy diffusion.

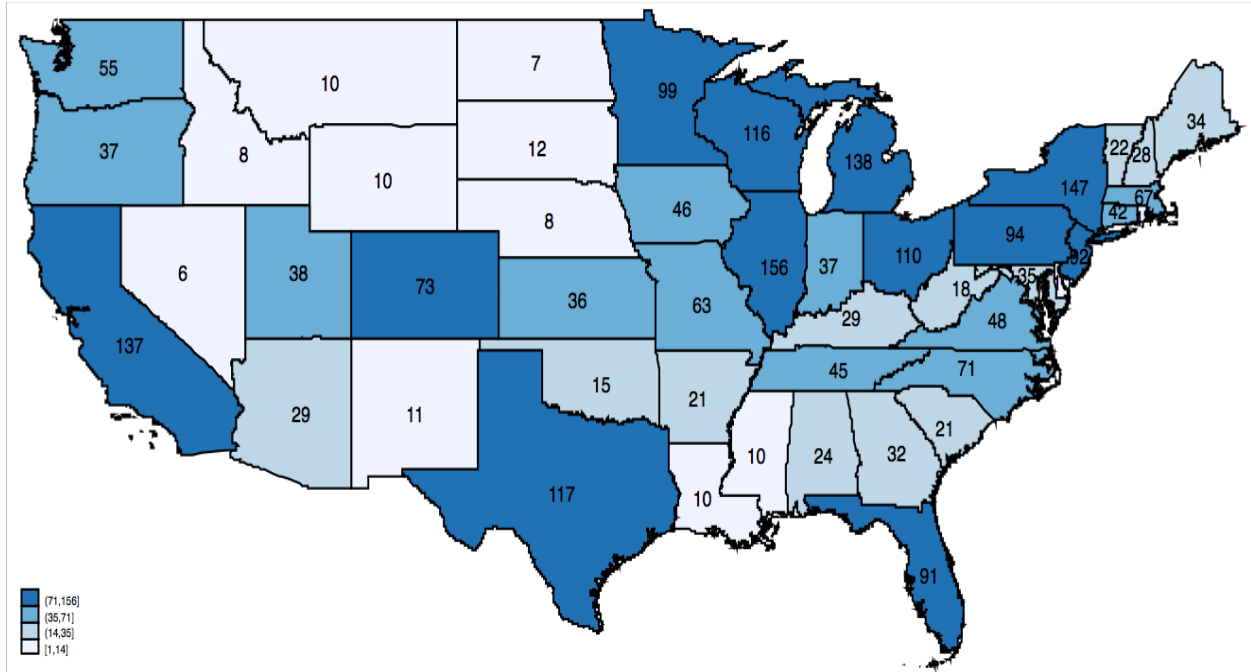
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Appendix A: Details of the Survey

The survey experiments in our analysis were administered online in July and August of 2012 to a subsample of participants in the 2012 National Municipal Officials Survey (NMOS). The sample of city officials for the survey was constructed by first downloading a list of all of the cities in the U.S. Census. Student research assistants then searched for the website of each town or city taken from the census. If the research assistants were able to identify the city website, they then collected the name and email address of the city mayor and council members (or the equivalent). The survey itself was created using the web-based program Qualtrics and was administered to municipal officials by sending them a link to the survey.

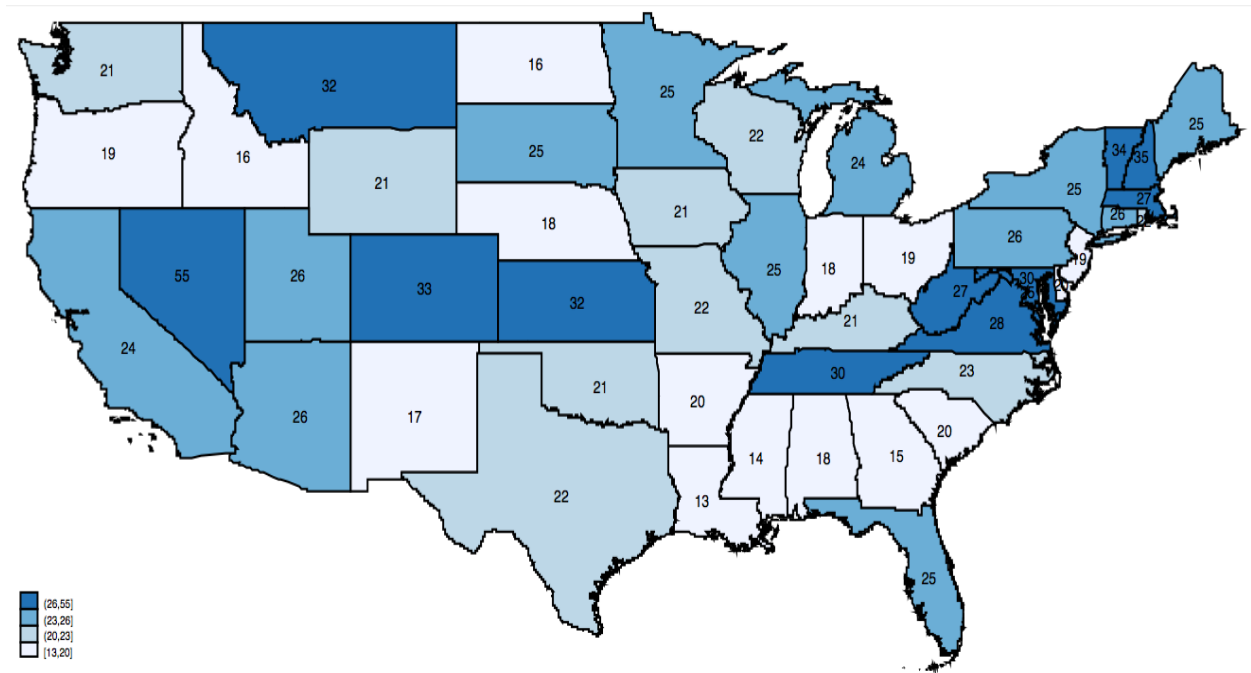
The response rate for the two survey experiments (which were administered to separate subsamples of officials) was around 23%, on par with recent expert surveys of this nature (e.g., Fisher and Herrick 2013, Harden 2013). As illustrated in the figures below, participants in the survey experiments provide broad geographic coverage across the United States.

**Number of Municipal Officials (from each State)
Participating in either Experiment 1 or 2**



Notes: Darker colors indicate greater participation in the survey.

**Response Rates (by State) of Municipal Officials
Invited to Participate in either Experiment 1 or 2**



Notes: Darker colors indicate greater participation in the survey.

Appendix B: Issue Position Questions

The table below lists the set of 53 questions used to estimate the ideological issue preferences of the policymakers. Policymakers were asked a randomly chosen subset of 28 of these questions. For each question we asked the policymaker to answer yes or no. The table also indicates the percent of “Yes” responses to each issue stance question as well as the discrimination parameter and intercept for each question, used to construct the ideological ideal points used throughout the paper.

Issue Position Questions

Question wording	% Answering Yes	Discrimi- nation parameter	Intercept
Do you support eliminating public funding for abortions and public funding of organizations that advocate or perform abortions?	45%	1.27	0.27
Do you support federal funding to create lines of stem cells from new embryos?	65%	-0.84	-0.49
Do you support prohibiting the late-term abortion procedure known as partial-birth abortion?	59%	0.59	-0.25
Should abortions always be legally available?	63%	-0.78	-0.45
Do you support including sexual orientation in your state's anti-discrimination laws?	71%	-0.82	-0.75
Do you support requiring that crimes based on sexual orientation be prosecuted as federal hate crimes?	54%	-0.57	-0.11
Should your state recognize civil unions between same-sex couples?	64%	-1.03	-0.58
Do you support affirmative action in state college and university admissions?	43%	-0.82	0.22
Should the federal government consider race and gender in government contracting decisions?	22%	-0.84	1.16
Do you support opening a select portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil exploration?	60%	1.36	-0.39
Do you support requiring the federal government to reimburse citizens when environmental regulations limit use of privately owned lands?	55%	0.39	-0.14
Do you support the U.S. re-entering the Kyoto treaty process to limit global warming?	52%	-1.77	-0.22
Should state environmental regulations be stricter than federal law?	44%	-0.59	0.19
Do you favor allowing citizens to carry concealed firearms?	61%	0.91	-0.37
Do you support banning the sale or transfer of all forms of semi-automatic weapons?	49%	-0.75	0.02

Do you support increasing restrictions on the purchase and possession of firearms?	50%	-1.12	-0.02
Do you support amnesty for certain illegal immigrants who already reside in the U.S.?	62%	-0.86	-0.43
Do you support establishing English as the official and recognized language of the U.S.?	72%	1.02	-0.84
Do you support prohibiting states from passing laws that deny human services (medical care education) to illegal immigrants or their children?	43%	-0.11	0.18
Do you support the enforcement of federal immigration laws by state and local police?	70%	0.94	-0.723
Do you support using military tribunals to try suspected terrorists when ordinary civilian courts are deemed inappropriate or impractical?	80%	0.57	-1.01
Should law enforcement agencies have greater discretion to monitor domestic communications, to prevent future terrorist attacks?	46%	0.31	0.11
Should the U.S. contribute more funding and troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions?	31%	-0.62	0.60
Should the U.S. support the creation of a Palestinian state?	52%	-0.66	-0.09
Do you support decriminalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana?	62%	-0.54	-0.37
Do you support imposing truth in sentencing for violent criminals so they serve full sentences with no chance of parole?	74%	0.51	-0.73
Do you support limiting the number of appeals allowed to inmates on death row?	68%	0.59	-0.55
Do you support the death penalty in your state?	61%	0.88	-0.37
Do you support increasing the minimum wage?	56%	-0.91	-0.23
Do you support providing direct financial assistance to homeowners facing foreclosure?	36%	-0.58	0.39
Do you support reducing government regulations on the private sector in order to encourage investment and economic expansion?	69%	1.23	-0.75
Do you support the right of workers to unionize?	80%	-0.59	-1.02
Do you support a merit pay system for teachers?	83%	0.31	-0.98
Do you support abstinence-only sexual education programs?	24%	0.72	0.89
Do you support increasing state funds for hiring additional teachers?	65%	-0.66	-0.46
Do you support providing parents with vouchers to send their children to any participating school: public, private, or religious?	50%	0.75	0.02
Is the tenure process for public school teachers producing effective teachers?	15%	-0.42	1.13
Do you support allowing doctors to prescribe marijuana to their patients for medicinal purposes?	71%	-0.52	-0.65
Do you support implementing a universal health care program to guarantee coverage to all Americans regardless of income?	54%	-2.26	-0.40

Do you support monetary limits on damages that can be collected in malpractice lawsuits?	77%	0.47	-0.82
Do you support requiring individuals to purchase health care insurance?	43%	-1.30	0.26
Do you support implementing a government-financed single-payer national health care system similar to that of Canada?	41%	-1.50	0.38
Do you support making President Bush's tax cuts permanent?	52%	1.46	-0.03
Do you support replacing the U.S. income tax structure with a flat income tax?	61%	0.64	-0.36
Do you support the permanent repeal of the federal estate tax?	58%	0.87	-0.28
Do you support increasing federal taxes on gasoline and diesel fuels to promote conservation and alternative fuel development?	40%	-0.99	0.37
Do you support increasing employment and job training programs for welfare recipients?	90%	-0.47	-1.42
Do you support limiting the benefits given to single women if they have additional children while receiving welfare benefits?	69%	0.56	-0.58
Do you support programs that provide job training and placement services for at-risk youth?	95%	-0.55	-1.92
Do you support providing child care for welfare recipients who work?	81%	-0.52	-1.00
Do you support redirecting welfare funding to faith-based and community-based private organizations?	39%	0.64	0.33
Do you support cutting taxes, even if it means deep cuts in government programs?	51%	1.32	0.00
Do you support efforts to consolidate 911 services with neighboring areas as a way to save municipal funds?	86%	-0.03	-1.08

Appendix C: Summary Statistics and Variable Descriptions

Summary Statistics for Variables in Table 1

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Interest in Learning	0.65	0.48	0	1
Treatment: Policy Successful	0.50	0.50	0	1
Conservatism × Treatment: Success	0.02	0.70	-2.47	2.19
Conservatism	0.04	1.00	-2.67	2.47
Considered Issue Before	0.75	0.44	0	1
Democrat	0.29	0.46	0	1
Republican	0.41	0.49	0	1
Partisan Election	0.27	0.44	0	1
Total Population (10K)	6.0	39.1	0.03	839.2
Percent Black	0.08	0.12	0	0.83
Percent Latino	0.10	0.14	0	0.80
Percent with Some College	0.22	0.12	0	0.63
Unemployment Rate	0.08	0.05	0	0.52
Percent: Unpaid 1st Mortgage	0.69	0.11	0.24	1
Percent: Unpaid 2nd Mortgage	0.04	0.04	0	0.66

Summary Statistics for Variables in Table 2

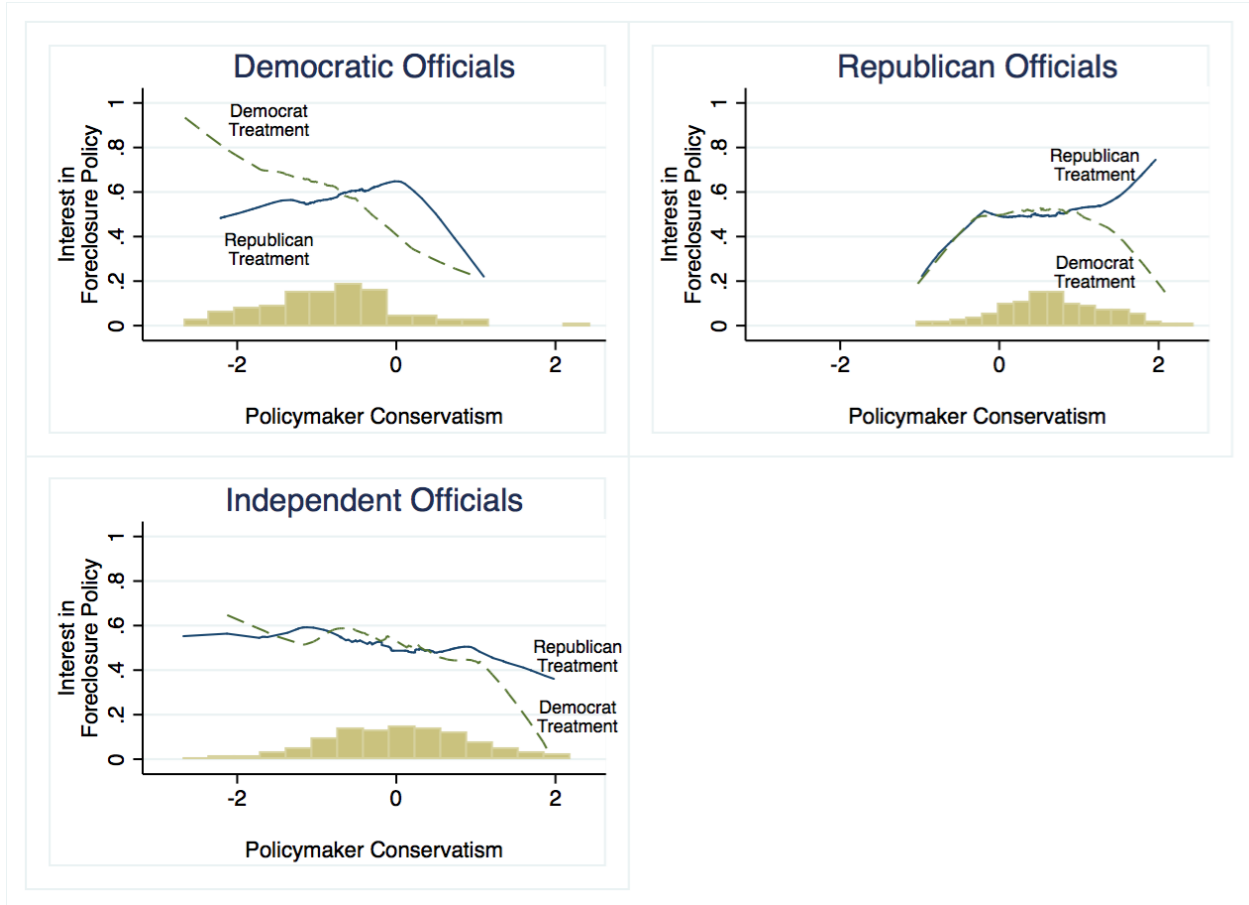
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Interest in Learning	0.54	0.50	0	1
Conservatism	-0.03	1.05	-2.7	2.44
Conservatism × Same Party	-0.03	0.75	-2.7	2.29
Treatment: Same Party	0.51	0.50	0	1
Extremism × Same Party	0.39	0.64	-0.97	2.66
Ideological Extremism	0.77	0.70	-2.43	2.66
Considered Issue Before	0.47	0.50	0	1
Democrat	0.46	0.50	0	1
Partisan Election	0.33	0.47	0	1
Total Population (10K)	7.1	40.7	0.01	839.2
Percent Black	0.09	0.13	0	0.83
Percent Latino	0.10	0.14	0	0.92
Percent with Some College	0.22	0.12	0	0.63
Unemployment Rate	0.08	0.05	0	0.50
Percent: Unpaid 1st Mortgage	0.68	0.10	0.28	1
Percent: Unpaid 2nd Mortgage	0.04	0.03	0	0.14

Description of Variables in Analysis

Variable	Description	Source
Dependent Variable		
Interest in Learning	Indicator variable. Equals 1 if respondent answered “Yes” to the question of whether they would like to learn more about the program described in the vignette. Equals 0 if respondent answered “No” to the question.	Survey experiment in 2012 NMOS
Independent Variables		
Treatment: Policy Successful	Indicator variable. Equals 1 if respondent assigned to read the story about a successful policy. Equals 0 if respondent assigned to read the story about an unsuccessful policy.	Survey experiment in 2012 NMOS
Conservatism	Ideal point estimate of respondents’ preferences over a range of political issues using issue position questions from the “political courage test” that Project Vote Smart administers to state and federal candidates. Lower values indicate that the policymaker has more liberal preferences, and higher values indicate more conservative preferences.	2012 NMOS
Treatment: Same Party	Indicator variable. Equals 1 if respondent self-identifies with the same party as that of the officials in the vignette; 0 otherwise. Only respondents who identified as either a Republican or Democrat are included in this measure.	Survey experiment and 2012 NMOS
Ideological Extremism	Equals the policymaker’s <i>Conservatism</i> if the respondent is Republican. For Democratic policymakers, <i>Extremism</i> is (-1) multiplied by their <i>Conservatism</i> .	2012 NMOS
Considered Issue Before	Indicator variable. Equals 1 if respondent in earlier question indicated that she had ever considered the policy presented in the vignette. Equals 0 if respondent indicated that she had not.	2012 NMOS
Democrat	Indicator variable. Equals 1 if respondent self-identifies as a Democrat; 0 otherwise.	2012 NMOS
Republican	Indicator variable. Equals 1 if respondent self-identifies as a Republican; 0 otherwise.	2012 NMOS
Partisan Election	Indicator variable. Equals 1 if respondent was elected in a partisan election, meaning that the respondent’s party was indicated on the ballot.	2012 NMOS
Total Population (10K)	Estimated 2009 population of the respondent’s city.	U.S. Census Bureau
Percent Black	Proportion of the population in the respondent’s city that is black.	U.S. Census Bureau
Percent Latino	Proportion of the population in the respondent’s city that is Latino.	U.S. Census Bureau
Percent with Some College	Proportion of the population in the respondent’s city that has more than a high school education.	U.S. Census Bureau
Unemployment Rate	Proportion of the population in the respondent’s city that is unemployed	U.S. Census Bureau
Percent: Unpaid 1st Mortgage	Proportion of the population in the respondent’s city that has an unpaid mortgage.	U.S. Census Bureau
Percent: Unpaid 2nd Mortgage	Proportion of the population in the respondent’s city that has an unpaid second mortgage.	U.S. Census Bureau

Appendix D: Interest in Learning, By Party and Treatment

This appendix provides results that explore the effects shown in Figure 5 and Table 2, broken down by officials' self-identified partisanship.



Notes: Locally weighted (lowess) averages of the probabilities for *Interest in Learning* in Experiment #2. The dashed (solid) line represents the results for the Democrat treatment (Republican treatment), with figures subdivided based on self-reported partisanship. The histogram shows the distribution of policymakers' ideology scores within each party.

Ideological Extremism and Partisan Learning, by Respondents' Party

	Republicans		Democrats	
	(A1)	(A2)	(A3)	(A4)
Respondent's Conservatism	-0.24 (0.28)	-0.26 (0.31)		
Conservatism × Same Party	-0.66* (0.37)	-0.71* (0.40)		
Respondent's Liberalism			-0.19 (0.23)	-0.11 (0.26)
Liberalism × Same Party			0.98*** (0.35)	1.23*** (0.41)
Treatment: Same Party	-0.34 (0.34)	-0.47 (0.38)	-0.68* (0.38)	-0.82* (0.45)
Considered Issue Before		1.12*** (0.26)		0.93*** (0.32)
Partisan Election		0.23 (0.29)		0.54* (0.33)
Total Population (10K)		-0.02 (0.02)		0.09** (0.03)
Percent Black		2.41* (1.44)		0.87 (1.12)
Percent Latino		1.05 (1.16)		-1.08 (0.99)
Percent with Some College		-2.71** (1.33)		-3.16** (1.52)
Unemployment Rate		-6.35* (3.70)		2.22 (4.31)
Percent: Unpaid 1st Mortgage		1.62 (1.48)		-3.90** (1.83)
Percent: Unpaid 2nd Mortgage		-4.96 (5.36)		0.65 (7.41)
Constant	0.11 (0.25)	-0.41 (1.03)	0.45* (0.27)	2.57** (1.25)
N	314	300	261	251
χ^2	4.0	38.4***	11.8***	66.3***

Notes: Logit analysis of the dichotomous *Interest in Learning* dependent variable from Experiment #2. Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, two-tailed. Models A1 and A2 present the results for Republicans, and Models A3 and A4 present the results for Democrats. The results of the analysis confirm the patterns shown in the figures above.